Overview of Final Recommendations

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE REGIONAL CHAIRMAN'S TASK FORCE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

It is the belief of the Task Force that adequate shelter, like food and water, is a necessity of life and therefore must be the undeniable right of every resident of Hamilton-Wentworth. We strongly believe that a full range of adequate, accessible and available affordable housing is a necessity for the social and economic health of the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. This is in agreement with Canada's ratification of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Consistent with this guiding principle, the Task Force accepts the following issues which must be addressed in the development of housing policies and strategies:

- *Affordable, adequate housing should be available to the most vulnerable groups. People who are unable, for whatever reason, to secure basic, affordable, permanent shelter may include independent youth, individuals who are physically, psychiatrically or developmentally challenged, people on fixed incomes, low income households, single parents, victims of domestic violence, single person households, seniors, immigrants, and refugees.*
- *Land and building materials are finite resources and must be managed according to the principles of sustainable development.*
- *All neighbourhoods should have an integration of housing types and levels of affordability.*
- *Community development processes should ensure a bottom-up approach to provide for the affordable housing need.*

BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE TASK FORCE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Regional Chairman's Task Force on Affordable Housing was established in September 1989 as a vehicle for providing community input to the Chairman and Regional Council on ways to address the growing problem of affordable housing in Hamilton-Wentworth. The Task Force is a community-based group, representing a wide spectrum of interests and perspectives, designed to respond to the equally wide spectrum of affordable housing needs in Hamilton-Wentworth. The Task Force Final Report, formally submitted to the Regional Council of Hamilton-Wentworth on July 16, 1991, discusses all these Regional affordable housing needs in detail, with a corresponding discussion of the wide range of housing types that 'affordable housing' comprises. More importantly, in its Final Report the Task Force recommends a new Regional strategy to respond to the affordable housing needs of Hamilton-Wentworth.

92-00359/

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Task Force Final Report presents a community-based plan that seeks to enable Hamilton-Wentworth to forge its own solutions to its affordable housing difficulties. This Report invites Hamilton-Wentworth, as a community, to take a leadership role in solving the Region's affordable housing problems. It asks for a "new perspective" on housing matters. This 'new way of thinking' involves a whole range of changes, from re-considering the planning process, to re-evaluating specific zoning by-laws, to encouraging and assisting innovative housing efforts through a variety of methods. The Task Force believes these changes and challenges must happen (for the most part) locally, and they must incorporate community-based response and participation. The focus on community involvement can be seen throughout the Task Force recommendations.

Based on almost two years of work, a comprehensive and carefully developed strategy is presented in the Task Force Final Report: it calls first for a new policy and regulatory environment to enable affordable housing, and then it offers (through various initiatives) proposals for even more direct Regional assistance in housing matters. The recommendations define what the Task Force feels the new Regional role should be to address the particular affordable housing needs in Hamilton-Wentworth, how the Area Municipalities may participate in this effort, and what Provincial and Federal initiatives go hand in hand with a new and more active Regional approach to affordable housing. The Federal and Provincial initiatives often represent a devolution of responsibility, including a re-allocation of funds, to the locally based solutions the Task Force advocates.

An overview of the Task Force on Affordable Housing Recommendations to the Regional Council of Hamilton-Wentworth.

SETTING THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT:

Targets and Objectives

Change in policy is the first step in providing opportunity for affordable housing in Hamilton-Wentworth. The policy changes recommended by the Task Force have a common goal: to ensure that an appropriate policy environment is created to foster the affordable housing effort in the Region. These changes would re-orient the policy framework for Regional housing activities. How this new framework dictates new implementation methods is the subject of other Task Force recommendations.

Among the policy changes suggested for the Region by the Task Force are the following:

- *Establish a goal of achieving a minimum of 25% affordable housing in all urban and rural planning units/neighbourhoods of Hamilton-Wentworth, existing and new, subject to servicing availability, in order to guarantee all residents have the opportunity to live in every area of the Region.*

- *Ensure an adequate and suitable supply of land is designated for medium to high density (12 or more units per acre) residential development and adopt as the current guideline the recommended target (part of the Regional Housing Statement Update) that at least 45% of all new development be medium or high density, subject to adequacy and availability of servicing.*

- *Demonstrate a policy commitment to intensification efforts.*

- *Use a variety of methodological tools to more definitively identify the housing needs of Hamilton-Wentworth residents, and develop, deliver and monitor policies and programs to meet these needs, including the requirements of special needs populations.*

- *Demonstrate a commitment to community development processes in resolving housing issues.*

SETTING THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT:

Modifications To Regional and Area Municipal Standards and Policies

Recommendations like these seek to enable affordable housing projects in two ways: First, by removing procedural or regulatory barriers that presently exist, and second, by clarifying the regulatory process and providing better information. These recommendations seek to challenge the present regulatory structures and presuppositions and replace them with a new framework that would provide increased opportunity for affordable housing in the Region. In particular, it is the Area Municipalities, in whose jurisdiction much of the regulatory environment falls, who are encouraged in these recommendations to respond in a new way as part of a Region-wide effort to open the door to affordable housing. Like the policy changes suggested by the Task Force, these regulatory changes continue to work at creating a more congenial environment throughout Hamilton-Wentworth for affordable housing.

Recommendations to change the regulatory environment include the following:

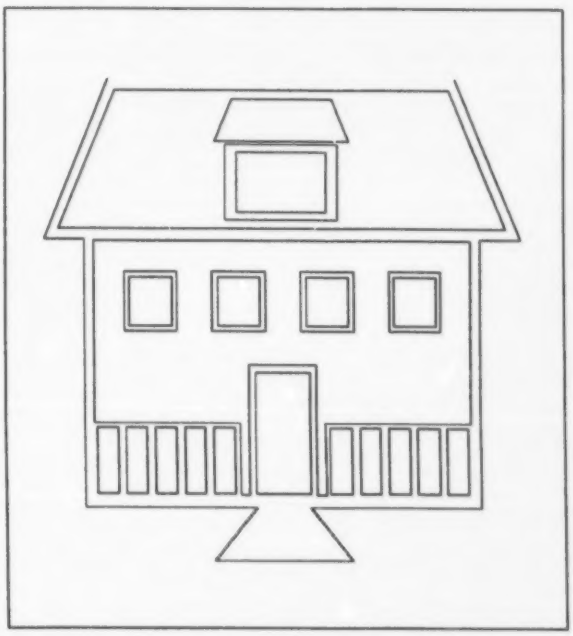
- *Establish a committee to prepare a framework that would seek to replace current exclusionary zoning with flexible zoning by-laws. The Task Force proposes specific zoning changes related to conversions and special needs housing. Recommendations to Provincial and Federal Governments to enable such flexibility are also made by the Task Force.*

- *Encourage enforcement of zoning, fire, health and safety codes so that affordable housing development is not only made possible, but made safe. A Task Force recommendation to the Province asks that building inspectors be provided with right of entry.*

- *Encourage an Area Municipal inspection program that recognizes the rights of tenants, including the idea of charging landlords the cost of relocating tenants. The Task Force recommends appropriate Provincial legislative change to enable this idea.*

- *Strive to protect the existing rental stock through tightening criteria guidelines for the Rental Housing Protection Act and widening their applicability.*

- *Strive to clarify the regulatory process by creating a clear procedural manual and reviewing the process regularly. Similar requests for Provincial review of regulatory procedures are also made by the Task Force.*



OFFERING ASSISTANCE:

Community Development Initiatives

In these recommendations, some very new Regional roles are defined in the Regional strategy proposed by the Task Force. These recommendations describe practical initiatives to implement the policy changes suggested by the Task Force, and they promote a local approach and commitment to affordable housing. Further to the policy and regulatory environments put in place through other Task Force recommendations, the Task Force suggests here how the Region could take steps to get people involved in the affordable housing effort. This set of suggestions is a series of general principles and initiatives designed to get people thinking about and involved in housing issues, and calling on the Region to take on direct contact with the community. More specific programs and services to enable community development are included among the list of activities for the Regional Housing Commission proposed by the Task Force (see later in this overview).

Among the recommendations made by the Task Force under this category of 'Community Development Initiatives' are the following:

- *A series of public participation principles should be adopted by the Region and should inform the implementation of any of the recommendations made by the Task Force. To explore this community involvement further, as well as its possible application to the planning process, the Task Force recommends a pilot project at the neighbourhood level.*

- *The Region should encourage a community development approach to housing and neighbourhood revitalization through projects with community groups and organizations and through support to innovative options like rent-to-own and home sharing. Corollary Task Force recommendations to Provincial and Federal Governments seek their assistance in the rehabilitation and maintenance of the existing stock (for example, revising the guidelines for the Ontario Home Renewal Program), as well as suggesting ways these other levels of government could facilitate home ownership.*

FOCUSING:

Initiatives To Generate Ideas On Affordable Housing

These Task Force recommendations suggest a series of Regional initiatives whose goal is to generate and promote innovative ideas on the design, development, management and financing of affordable housing, another sign of direct Regional commitment to affordable housing. These recommendations would seek to ensure that there are affordable housing products available - that there is something 'affordable' to build, and that these ideas are suitably publicized and rewarded. Again a 'new perspective', this series of recommendations seeks to promote ideas which would reflect the proposed policy and regulatory changes of other Task Force recommendations, since many of the methods for encouraging innovative affordable housing ideas would look to both policy support and more flexible zoning by-laws for viability. These recommendations also emphasize the community involvement that the Task Force consistently endorses.

Initiatives proposed by the Task Force in this category include:

- *Encourage community sponsorship and organization of a Grass Roots Affordable Housing CHARETTE (marathon think tank) in Hamilton-Wentworth in 1992. Participants could include citizens, representatives of housing organizations and agencies, the building and development industry, the architectural profession, and government departments. Sites in the existing urban area should be used as case studies. Provincial funding should be sought.*

- *Organize a demonstration project (including Provincial participation) for affordable housing on Provincially owned land located in Hamilton-Wentworth.*

- *Establish an Affordable Housing Awards Committee, conditional upon the commitment of another Region to joint participation, to recognize and publicize innovation and quality in the design,*

financing, development, and/ or management of affordable housing, private and non-profit, in the Region.

- *Encourage innovative subdivision and neighbourhood design and maintain a library of these designs.*

READY TO BUILD:

Enabling and Ensuring The Construction of Affordable Housing

This is a set of recommendations that would seek to ensure that affordable housing could actually begin the construction stage. The goal of this set of recommendations is to provide opportunities for the building of affordable housing in the Region by addressing three things:

1) *Ensuring that there is land available for affordable housing projects.*

2) *Ensuring that land can be accessed.*

3) *Ensuring that affordable housing is actually built.*

Another step in a new Regional strategy, these recommendations propose increased financial, administrative, and regulatory commitments. 'Building' on the policy, process, community involvement, and ideas outlined in other sets of Task Force recommendations, the suggestions here would enable the physical construction of affordable housing, again by suggesting a series of changes and challenges to existing methods of operation.

Recommendations to enable construction in the **non-profit and cooperative sector** include:

- *Develop a Regional Affordable Housing First Policy to ensure that Regionally owned lands that are suitable for residential use and are declared surplus are offered for purchase or lease (through a revolving fund - see recommendation below) in the first instance for the development of affordable housing. As part of this Policy, unallocated funds from the sale of Regionally owned land should be contributed to the same revolving fund for the purpose of assisting non-profit housing providers in accessing land. Area Municipalities and Boards of Education in Hamilton-Wentworth should be requested to pursue similar Affordable Housing First Policies.*

- *Obtain a revolving block fund of at least $6 million from the Provincial Government to be used for a Regionally directed program to assist non-profit housing providers in accessing land. A committee would develop terms of reference for the revolving fund. A separate fund of $1 million should be established for cost writedowns in special circumstances.*

- *Task Force recommendations to other levels of government include increasing allocations, making loan guarantees more readily available, selling or exchanging surplus Provincial land, and encouraging the development of non-profit equity options through programs and financial mechanisms.*

For the **private sector**, the Task Force makes the following recommendations :

- *Encourage land leases and innovative tenureship and home ownership options in order to stimulate the home ownership market.*

- *Encourage the negotiation of development agreements that work towards achieving the Regional affordable housing goal (see earlier set of Task Force policy recommendations in this overview). As part of this effort, the application procedure for all new subdivisions and condominiums should be changed to require applicants to identify how proposals fit with the Regional goal.*

- *Task Force recommendations to other levels of government include financial mechanisms to encourage affordable housing construction and investment (ideas like the Home Savings Bond, and pension fund or credit union investment in affordable housing); and other mechanisms (for example, a Provincial "Green Tax" to discourage larger, less sustainable development).*

- *The Task Force also recommends that the Provincial Government be requested to require that if a developer's proposal for new residential development does not fit with Regional housing objectives (as outlined in the Task Force policy recommendations), the applicant should offer something "in lieu" to support the development of affordable housing.*

Recommendations to assist both **non-profit and private** developers include the following:

- *Encourage the pursuit of joint ventures between the Region and the non-profit and private sectors that would lead to the use of new and innovative techniques to provide affordable housing and to further the objectives stated in the Guiding Principles of the Chairman's Task Force on Affordable Housing.*

  Methods to implement these ventures would be to: Establish a joint venture revolving fund of $ 0.5 million; through the proposed Regional Housing Commission (see description that follows); and operate a second mortgage program to assist developers of affordable housing.

- *A Task Force recommendation to the Province proposes the negotiation of a Regional-Area Municipal-Provincial Housing Agreement to cover issues like the revolving fund (and Provincial funding for this fund) and the joint venture fund and to recognize the new responsibilities of the Area Municipalities and the Region in addressing housing needs in Hamilton-Wentworth.*

A RECOMMENDED VEHICLE FOR REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN HOUSING:

A Regional Housing Commission

In its recommendations, the Task Force suggests how an appropriate policy and regulatory environment could be put in place in Hamilton-Wentworth to encourage affordable housing. Various initiatives to encourage attention to affordable housing efforts and to enable its construction are also proposed. In this recommendation the Task Force turns to its suggestion for a vehicle to implement much of what could result from all those other changes in outlook and activity.

One of the major arguments for the establishment of such a Commission is that it is a vehicle through which the Region could manage the devolved housing authority it is seeking from the Province. The Commission represents, perhaps more strongly than any other initiative, the Region's willingness to take on its own housing problems, a willingness and commitment the Task Force has encouraged through the strong, proactive actions represented in its other recommendations.

The creation of such a Commission represents an effort to provide a coordinated Regional response to housing issues. The composition of the Commission is reflective of the Task Force focus on community involvement. The Commission will also, in turn, be an agent to foster even more community development and participation in housing issues. The underlying Task Force belief that a 'new perspective' on housing is needed would find clear expression in the form of the Commission, its formation, and its operation.

The Task Force recommendation for such a Commission includes A detailed implementation plan for the creation of a Regional Housing Commission should be prepared for consideration by Regional Council in six months. The implementation plan should address issues such as: the organizational structures and relationships; the composition and appointment of the Commission (a mix of appointed political representation Regional and Provincial; and elected citizen representation including advocates for community groups, and representatives of special needs pcpulations); financial arrangements for its operation, including funding requests to the Province to support the 'devolution' of responsibility that is being proposed through the Commission; and mandate and role - including the following major arms of activity:

i) To Operate as an Administrative/ Delivery Mechanism:

- *to administer the Revolving Fund and the Joint Venture fund proposed by the Task Force; and*
- *to develop a Region-wide delivery mechanism for community-based rehabilitation and maintenance programs.*

ii) To Serve as a Centre for the Study of Innovative Ideas in Housing and to Analyze and Seek Solutions to Housing Needs in Hamilton-Wentworth:

- *to sponsor design competitions;*
- *to research novel ideas on equity, financing, design, management or other innovative housing techniques; and*
- *to investigate other community housing needs and possible solutions, including a conservation of the formation of a Regional Non-Profit Housing Corporation*

iii) To Provide Facilitative/Technical and Coordinating Services:

- *to provide assistance to individuals and groups at different stages in the development process;*
- *to generally coordinate and assist providers of non-profit housing, where such assistance is needed;*
- *to develop collaborative arrangements with support service agencies;*
- *to provide assistance to tenants through a variety of services (the Task Force also makes recommendations to the Provincial Government to support tenant involvement through various initiatives); and*
- *to encourage a variety of partnerships.*

iv) To Provide a Central Public Information Service:

- *to provide a series of public information services including those that would provide information on housing issues and programs such asintensification.*

v) To Perform an Advocacy Role:

- *to represent the Region's housing concerns and needs with other levels of government.*

The Regional Chairman's Task Force on Affordable Housing Final Report can be ordered by calling (416) 546-4115 or by writing to :

Secretary to the Regional Chairman's
Task Force on Affordable Housing
Clerk's Department
Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth
119 King Street West, 15th, Floor
P.O. Box 910
Hamilton, Ontario
L8N 3V9

The Task Force Final Report can also be reviewed at this address.